Presentation: "Quality Assurance"

Speaker: Mr. David Taylor, EPA Region 9

Mr. Taylor is a Team Leader in charge of document review in the Region 9 Quality Assurance (QA) Office. His responsibilities include reviewing sampling plans, QA plans, and other QA-related documents; providing training; working on national workgroups related to Agency QA issues; and providing technical support to all the media programs within the Region. He has worked directly for EPA for the last seven and a half years, and prior to that held a number of QA-related positions for consulting firms and environmental laboratories supporting EPA.

Handout: "Clean Water Act (CWA) Enforcement" (Electronic copy not available)

Notes:

Mr. Taylor discussed the four CWA permitting issues below:

1. Acceptability of Contract Laboratory Program-Type Methods or Equivalent

   The State of California is placing more emphasis on the analytical methods used for drinking water compliance. Some federal facilities have been using contract laboratory program-type methods or equivalent – the kind of methods that might be used for a Superfund-type project – for drinking water compliance purposes. EPA's understanding is that the State of California will no longer favor these methods as much as they have in the past.

2. Lack of Quality Assurance (QA) Program Documentation of Permittees

   The EPA Quality Assurance Office is uncomfortable with permittees' lack of QA documentation. The EPA QA Office is pushing the Water Division in Region 9 for more language in permits that requires more structure in terms of quality systems. This structure includes potentially preparing a Quality Assurance Plan (QAP) to cover NPDES discharge. The Water Division is pushing back on the QAP portion, so nothing is going forward on this point. If a QAP is eventually required, it would likely need to describe the sampling activities, including collection and preservation, minimum qualifications of samplers, analytical methods, and proposed analytical laboratory. The QAP should also include the lab's standard operating procedures.

3. Approval Process for Use of Alternative Test Procedures Not Listed in CWA

   If you want to use an analytical method that is not specifically called out in the CWA, you are required to present information to the regional administrator for evaluation of acceptable reporting use. Currently this is done on a method-by-method basis. A better solution is for the EPA office in Washington to evaluate a wide range of methods and publish the approved methods in the Federal Register. However, EPA headquarters is reluctant to do this. Methods 200.7, 200.8, 218.6, and 300.0 (mainly metals and anions) make up the bulk of

alternative requests received. EPA Region 9 has requested concurrence from Region 9 states in approving these methods for CWA compliance use. If all states in Region 9 concur with this approval, EPA Region 9 will give blanket approval, and you will no longer have to submit applications for these methods. For other methods, you would have to follow the current process.

4. Data Quality Act of 2001

   This act requires all federal agencies making influential decisions to base their decision on data of known quality. Federal agencies have been trying to develop information quality guidelines that can be evaluated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and put in place by October 2002. The main target of this act is likely EPA, even though Department of Agriculture and others must also comply. The Act specifically targets data that supports decisions for regulations. This Act provides a way to challenge data that went into the law promulgation. The Act is fairly general and also addresses data that is disseminated to the public. OMB's requirements suggest that third-party data (maps, databases, etc.) may require compliance with these information quality guidelines.

Discussion:

Regarding	Questions/Remarks	Response*
Lack of QA Program Documentation	Are you contemplating requiring that splits and spikes be included in the QA program in the future?	Mr. Taylor replied that at this point, EPA's purpose is not so much to dictate what the QA program should be, but to see some documentation that a QA program exists. No discussion has occurred in EPA's QA Office or with the Water Division about minimum QAP requirements.
Lack of QA Program Documentation	Will you mandate 95% certainty levels for QA data?	Mr. Taylor did not believe that this would be required. EPA is trying to get to the point of having data of known quality and is not focusing on how high that quality has to be.
Data Quality Act of 2001	For work centering on risk assessment, data of unknown or low quality has no use. The participant sees the Act as a good trend to avoid decisions based on data of unknown quality.	Mr. Taylor stated that EPA has started thinking about QA at higher management levels. To some extent, issue of databases and other information going to the public has motivated management to look at data quality and strategic plans for data.

Regarding	Questions/Remarks	Response*
		plans for data.